Criticism

Volume 23 | Issue 3 Article 5

1981

Book Reviews

Criticism Editors

Book Reviews

Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art by Julia Kristeva, edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. Pp. xii + 305. $16.95.

This is a collection of ten essays which Julia Kristeva wrote between 1966 and 1976, a period marked, among other things, by the events of May 1968 and therefore dated but in no way outdated. Two of the essays were selected from *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969), the other eight from *Polylogue* (1977). The translators have to be praised for their courage to attempt an impossible task. In the introduction, Leon Roudiez, the editor, expresses his belief that the translation is faithful and his hope that it be readable. I find that it is readable, especially, if one hears at times a faint echo of the French original, but faithful, no. In any case, faithful to what? To an original polysemy? How is one to translate *bouche-trou*? By "substitute" (p. 272)? Or *au ras de la pulsion* by "at the level of drive" (p. 276)? Every page testifies not only to what Kristeva calls in the preface to the book under review "the difference in mental and intellectual habits" (vii) between the U. S. and Europe, but to the impossibility of translating the many hints inherent in natural languages of which a translation captures only one or two in any given expression.

While the translation, good as it is by customary standards, necessarily does violence to Kristeva's text and in fact offers one of many possible readings of it, the violence itself, far from being external to the text it transforms, is in fact quite appropriate and indeed intrinsic to it because, for Kristeva, at least during the period under discussion, language is always a form of sublimated repression, a kind of violent transformation of the silent music of libidinal impulses into infinite desire: *Desire in Language.*

The ten translated essays of which eight are published here for the first time are reviews of a motley group of writers (Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, La Sale, Bakhtin, Barthes, Céline, Beckett, Sollers, Freud) and of two painters (Giotto, Bellini). The collection offers a representative sample of Kristeva's main theoretical preoccupations between 1966 and 1976 which found their most systematic treatment to date in the first part, entitled *préliminaires théoriques* of her monograph *La Révolution du language poétique* (1974). Two issues in particular recur with obsessional regularity in the ten essays under review. They provene from semiotics and psychoanalysis and address, respectively, the following two projects: (1) to draw up a genealogy and anatomy of linguistic performances by situating them in the biological, historical, sociological, and psychological infra- and superstructures in which they occur, deconstructing thereby not only their face value of meaning but their meaningfulness alto-

gether; (2) to insert the speaking subject into the analysis of linguistic performances and to insert it not as a unitary Cartesian or as a transcendental Kantian or Husserlian ego, but as divided subject, split (*clevé*) between conscious and unconscious processes, truly, as Kristeva writes elsewhere, a *sujet-en-procès*, a subject whose unity and identity are perpetually put to trial and found wanting.

Both topics, the deconstruction of the text as object as well as that of the writing/reading subject, are articulated within the space excavated by a crucial distinction between *le symbolique* and *le sémiotique*, the symbolic and semiotic dimensions of linguistic acts. *Le symbolique* is characterized by the production and enactment of identity and representation, paradigmatically condensed in the magical thetic naming of language whose divine *fiat* provides the world with meaning. *Le sémiotique*, by contrast, is that which renders meaning impossible, the rhythmic dance of erotic impulses, a silent and inexorable whirling and twisting of all figural space produced by a *materia prima* and *musicata*. To put it into a single image: *le sémiotique* is the free-play of differential marks produced by a doodling hand on the white page of possible meanings; *le symbolique* is the Gestalt that emerges for the subject from the doodle like a kind of compulsory parapraxis.

Readers generally agree, however, that the real pleasure in reading Kristeva does not stem so much from an accumulation of erudite insights. To be more precise and to use one of Ryle's distinctions, it is not so much a "knowing that" which Kristeva's text instills in the reader but a "knowing how." In this she is similar to Lacan, Barthes, and Derrida who profoundly influenced her work during that period. She leaves the reader not so much with a neatly packaged content but with a rather elusive style, a style which is best described as heterogeneous. The effect of it is, as Barthes put it on the cover of her book, that she "changes the places of things: she always destroys the *latest preconception*, the one we thought we could be comforted by...." She pluralizes and pulverizes not only the meanings of the text or painting she is analyzing but her own insights as well. With rare courage, self-assurance and humility, she deconstructs her own theory while writing it. In this sense her style performs what her theory is mostly about: the unforseeable irruption, into the text, of heterogeneity, of contradiction, of irrational forces. This gives her style an element of unsurveyability, opacity, incomprehensibility, and overdetermination. If one can enjoy these and similar features of suspended floating, the greatest treasures of reading her book may be stored precisely here. No telling what turn her text might take next. The logic which it enacts is close to the surrealist logic of surprise and to the psychoanalytic logic of transference: it abounds with islands of semantic polyvalence or, what is often better, of empty semantic space which her readers are free or compelled to fill ("cathect") with the unforeseeable wanderings of their own desires. In other words, Kristeva pulls her readers gently into a mimesis of her own textual practice. The experience, as I perceive it, is liberating. Her text cuts across disciplinary boundaries and uses the energy released by the transgression of taboos of beliefs to articulate sure and precise intuitions about the heart of the matter at hand.

But what precisely is, for her, the heart of the matter? In this book, as elsewhere in her work, it is paradox. More specifically, the paradox of the sign, the semiotic paradox. It is because of her vigorous insistence on this paradox in whatever she chooses to approach textually, that her approach to literature and art is semiotic.

There is probably no better way to pinpoint briefly what is distinctively semiotic in Kristeva's approach than to say that her text celebrates, perhaps secretly, the marriage, appropriately conflictual, of two of the most outstanding semioticians of our time: Peirce and Heidegger. Both are not only aficionados but enamorados of the paradox of the sign. Both assert that what makes something a sign is its simultaneous membership in multiple universes which are incommensurable but can be linked by way of signification, i. e., "jumps" of meaning (catastrophes). Like Peirce, Kristeva discovers at the heart of the symbol three other universes, firstness (motherhood), secondness (hetergeneity), and nothingness, whose prerationality, irrationality, and transrationality account for the magic of symbolic world-making. Like Heidegger, she pushes thinking through its representational mode back/forward into a non-figural mood of being grasped by and answering to what makes us think.

Another way of putting this is to say that with Kristeva the semiotic turn is worked into a trope of chiasmus between sense and nonsense, symbol and symbiosis, law and transgression, semantic diffusion and logocentric gathering. In this trope which, as Greimas demonstrates in considerable complexity, can be worked through infinitely many symbolic oppositions, nothing is or remains what it is, nothing is itself, everything is something else or, in short, a sign. There is in such a textual practice, which thinks of itself in Lucretian fashion as enacting the logic of the universe, only one place which, like the eye of a hurricane, is awesomely calm, indeed unmoving. This is the place of the eye (I) of semiosis, the place in which the wheel of semiosis turns over from nothingness into firstness into secondness into thirdness; one, two, three... infinity; a place which Peirce called "boundless freedom" and which Kristeva's text, even in translation, successfully evokes like a huge silence which gives melody to her practice of writing.

EUGEN BAER

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Petrarch's Poetics and Literary History by Marguerite R. Waller. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980. Pp. xii + 163. $13.50.

Marguerite Waller's reading of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi* is both deconstructive and reconstructive in so far as its insistence on a relational reading of these works against, in particular, the *Commedia* of Dante shifts the focus from the closed unity of the text to what may be a no-less-closed notion of literary history. Her idea of *Petrarch's Poetics* appears to be founded more on Petrarch's categorizing (and, therefore, isolating) notion of history than on a legitimately deconstructive idea of literary history which does not

sacrifice the synchronic interaction of text and world, of language and history, to the diachronic exigencies of intertextuality. To isolate literary history from history is to reaffirm the validity of Petrarch's approach to the fictionalization of the ages of man. While the distinction between narrative and history which she underscores in her opening chapter as "an essential element... of both Petrarch's concept of history and his poetics" (p. 83) may serve paradigmatically to distinguish literary history from social history, it should not be invoked as a principle which precludes a referential reading of such systems together. It may, indeed, be true that the Petrarchan texts "insist upon the priority of poetic relationships in their production of significance and hence in their presentation of poetic tradition or literary history," but that in itself should demand that the competent reader of Petrarch not merely assert, but ask why "the signifying possibilities of the medieval 'allegorical' mode of discourse (as particularly exemplified by Dante's *Commedia*) are no longer imaginatively available" (xi-xii). From a semiotic point of view this is certainly one of the more intriguing questions.

Coming, as it does, on the heels of Giuseppe Mazzotta's recent study of Dante's attempt to integrate the *katabasistic* processes of Roman history into the greater paradigm of salvation history through the medium of intertextuality, Waller's work paves the way for a deconstructive referential reading of Boccaccio's textual strategies against the background of the *Commedia*. When the "Three Crowns of Florence" are read relationally and collectively against the background of classical and patristic literature, we shall have a better idea of their theories of semiotic production. If this is done in such a way that the intertextual foreground does not entirely obscure the intercontextual background, we shall have a better understanding of our own notion of literary history.

All in all, Waller's study raises and skillfully deals with some of the most important questions concerning Petrarch's literary production and place in literary history. The most lucid sections (in contrast to some others which are rather opaque) are those which deal most directly with the poetics of the *Canzoniere* and the problematic of narrative and event in the *Trionfi*. What may previously have been seen as "bad" writing is convincingly presented as "concerted experimentation in *negative stylistics*" (p. 123), intended, ultimately, to make the point that "any historical understanding is inevitably figural, that a new historical understanding replaces one set of metaphorical possibilities with another" (p. 132). What will undoubtedly disturb some readers of Waller's book is the further insinuation that historical "knowledge" is a metaphorical deception which masquerades as historical experience. In the same vein, if this were true, it could be argued that literary history masquerades as poetics.

ANDREA DI TOMMASO

Wayne State University

Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts by Margot Heinemann. Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1980. Pp. ix + 300. $27.50.

In the last several decades a group of brilliant historians–Lawrence Stone, Christopher Hill, H. R. Trevor-Roper, J. H. Hexter, among others–has been refining and modifying our picture of Tudor and Stuart society. We now realize that since medieval times there were "rising" and "falling" gentry; that many members of "older" families, some of them aristocrats, were among the "new" capitalist entrepreneurs of the Elizabethan period; that the term "Puritan" covers a wide spectrum of types from indigent, illiterate zealots to powerful, sophisticated aristocrats; and that an Opposition to the Court–at least in the Jacobean period–was not confined to the House of Commons but even included some of James's closest councillors. However, literary historians have been slow to utilize these findings. L. C. Knights' *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1937) was published before most of this research had been done. It remains the best single work on its subject, but its vision of Jacobean society, with amoral, usurious New Men in mortal combat with amiable but feckless Old Family Gentry, is painfully oversimplified. Thus it is a pleasure to discover in this new, full-length study of Middleton that Margot Heinemann approaches her subject fully versed in the recent historical scholarship. Indeed, published as it is in a series sponsored by the English historical journal *Past and Present* and influenced (as Heinemann mentions) by the prodigious and prolific Christopher Hill, one nervously anticipates the sort of book that lifts passages from context to establish historical points. But while concentrating on the socio-political aspects of Middleton's works, Heinemann constantly demonstrates that she can treat her material with proper regard for its literary and dramatic origins. She shows, for example, that much of Middleton's reputation as a baiter of Puritans in his early private theater comedies comes from a misreading of the function such characters serve. They are part of a wider picture in which representatives of all social groups are equally satirized: not merely Knights' New Men but the heriditary aristocracy and gentry as well. In *A Trick to Catch the Old One* there are three usurers, even-handedly represented as a merchant, a lawyer, and a member of the gentry. The impoverished gentleman Witgood outwits his opponents, but as Heinemann insists, "he succeeds... by using his wits more skillfully than the moneylenders, not by the superior moral right of gentry against citizens, or wastrels against usurers."

Her careful reading of the texts alters our sense of the plays, but Heinemann's most valuable contributions come from her use of biography and social history. She shows that Middleton, far from being anti-Puritan, came from a family with the same sort of moderate Puritan views as a large majority of Londoners. They wanted to eliminate all traces of Popery from the English Church and Court; their beliefs were as much political as religious. This did not preclude disdain and condescension toward the innumerable lower-class Puritan sects

like the notorious "Family of Love" which Middleton satirized in a play of that name. Even the fervid Puritan leader John Field denounced them as heretical. According to Heinemann, in Middleton's work "Puritan" always refers to such marginal fanatics. This claim seems to me most strained by *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* where the religious hypocrites show some of the prime marks of mainstream Puritans, particularly their connections with Cambridge University and Amsterdam. But even here Heinemann persuasively argues her thesis of the even-handedness of Middleton's satire, for the aristocracy and gentry are shown to be as corrupt as any of the religious hypocrites among the citizens.

In the 1610's Middleton's connection with Puritans and Puritanism became closer. He began to write pageants for the induction of the Lords Mayor of London, and by this means seems to have become acquainted with some affluent and powerful City Puritans. He also was appointed as London's official historian or "chronographer." Thus Middleton's selection to write the anti-Spanish, anti-Court *A Game at Chess* (1624) was altogether natural. Heinemann suggests that the King's Men were permitted to present the play through the influence of the (as she claims) Puritan-sympathizing Lord Chamberlain, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke. Whatever his religious beliefs, his political feelings were certainly those of a Protestant nationalist. Heinemann's hypothesis makes sense, for under the rigorous administration of the Master of the Revels Sir Henry Herbert (a relative of the Earl's), a play like *A Game at Chess* with so many grounds for offense both public and private would never have been allowed under normal circumstances. Permission would have required special pressure at the highest level. Under the circumstances the Earl of Pembroke was not risking very much even if Middleton was. And indeed it is possible that the playwright was punished, for we have no clear evidence of any play by Middleton after this. Possibly his career ended under the same circumstances as Marston's, possibly for similar reasons.

The Oppositionist impulse behind *A Game at Chess* was not a unique effort. In a valuable concluding section Heinemann traces anti-Court themes in plays written by relatively obscure playwrights (Drue, Wilson, Davenport) and mostly for the proletarian audiences at the Red Bull and Fortune theaters. These continued intermittently from the 1620's until it was decided by Puritan leaders to close the theaters in 1642. Heinemann believes that even this notorious decision may not have been made out of what has been universally assumed to be a doctrinaire aversion to the theater per se. Cautious MP's may have decided on closure to prevent "a new popular drama emerging, appealing to the political and religious radicalism of the lower orders." According to Heinemann, "the ban was operated much more strictly against plays than against rope-dancers, acrobats, and jugglers (who would seem ... just as idle and corrupting). Apparently the censorship was, like that of the Stuarts, primarily a political one. Without it there might possibly have been a Leveller drama as well as Leveller tracts and oratory." This suggestive and startling hypothesis certainly deserves serious consideration and further scrutiny.

Middleton is primarily remembered for his two late tragedies, *The Changeling* and *Women Beware Women*. Here again Heinemann's socio-historical perspective provides a new focus. She suggests that Middleton's attitude toward

his greatest characterization, that of Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*, resembles that of the average London Puritan toward the infamous Lady Frances Howard. A Howard could get away with anything. For their part in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, Lady Frances and her husband, the Earl of Somerset, spent some years in the Tower but were eventually freed; their lower class accomplices were executed. The atrophy of Beatrice-Joanna's moral sense is a product of her social position, and this, Heinemann argues, reflects Middleton's Puritanic, anti-Court, "levelling" attitudes. Rather than merely being "doomed" to act as she did (as the current stress on the Calvinism of some passages suggests), Beatrice-Joanna reflects the ugly indifference to the lower elements in society that is endemic in a rigidly hierarchical social structure. Heinemann sees a comparable strain of thought in *Women Beware Women* where Leantio's mother becomes spokesman for simple bourgeois "Puritanic" values which are under attack by the socially superior groups.

This clearly-written, unostentatious book is quietly original. At times the argument may seem conjectural. Thus the Appendix describing Middleton's Puritan patrons hardly proves much about their precise influence on him. Nonetheless, Heinemann's basic thesis seems to me to construct a more plausible social base for Middleton's work than any I know. Perhaps of broader value is the way it diminishes the significance of the fulminations of Puritan theater-haters like Stubbes, Gosson, and Prynne. Now we realize that it was perfectly possible for a London citizen to accept the central core of Puritan doctrine, to go to plays, to laugh at the zealots of Middleton and Jonson, and to take no personal offense at the satire. As for Heinemann's view of Middleton as a dramatist of the political "opposition," a growing number of studies have been concluding that a considerable amount of political sentiment against the Court (as well as courts) managed to get expressed on the Jacobean stage. Despite the surveillance of the intermittently efficient office of the Master of the Revels, it was possible to convey criticism of the Court's policies and morals to those capable of hearing the coded messages. Middleton was not alone among his contemporaries in his political and social attitudes. It is one of my few complaints about Heinemann's book that she seems unaware of some American scholarship which would serve to make her Middleton part of a larger group.

PHILIP J. FINKELPEARL

University of Massachusetts
Boston

The Sword and the Spirit: Puritan Responses to the Bible by John R. Knott, Jr. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1980. Pp. ix + 194. $18.00.

John R. Knott has written a helpful, odd, pleasing book. One wonders that this study has not been attempted before. "Puritan responses to the Bible" distinguished Puritans from Anglicans while they formed the very basis of Puritanism. Indeed, simply because their own responses were so intense, the

Puritans probably forced anti-Puritans to respond more fully to the Bible than they might ordinarily have done. It is hard, when one pauses, to imagine a study of seventeenth-century British literature without some consideration of men's responses to the Bible.

Part of the sanity of this book is its quietness. Knott aims to distinguish among different responses, yet many of them sound alike. Anglicans often sound like Puritans, indeed, which is not surprising since the English Church and nation were nominally Protestant and the Bible was essentially the same book for all; responses to the same book should show some resemblance. Knott does not oversimplify the differences partly because, in recording the responses, he catches the similarities.

By the end of his study, the Bible has become something quite un-biblical. The Bible is not only the Bible, but also the Gospel, the Truth, the Word. Just as Knott is sensibly flexible in defining a "Puritan," so he is flexible in what it was men responded to. Or, to put it another way, probably the most interesting point Knott makes is the way in which Puritans came, during the course of the seventeenth century, to play so fast and loose with the Bible that one can almost argue they were no longer paying much attention to the Bible at all. That, among reknowned bibliolators, is some stunt.

Knott focuses upon a group of men, from Luther onward, for whom the Bible was almost animated, so intense was their response to it. It was, for them, peculiarly "the living Word" which entered their lives, at times piercing like a two-edged sword. It could smite down God's enemies or enter the heart of the adept with quickening power, terror, or zeal. As Knott points out, establishment apologists for the English church—even Jewel—felt a cooler, more reverential relationship. The Church, or tradition was important for them as well as the scripture, they tended to elevate the Bible as an holy object of veneration, and they attempted to find in the textures and shape of the whole some overall coherence. For them individual texts would never "strike" at their heart nor could the images in them be appropriated into their own prose so easily, as they could for Puritans.

Five "Puritanic" writers are examined, each in a chapter: Richard Sibbes, Richard Baxter, Gerrard Winstanley, John Milton, and John Bunyan. It seems the exposition builds toward the last two in a flexible way. Knott shows how Sibbes, quietly, worked—especially with biblical, figurative language—upon both the reason *and* the *emotions* of his auditors through "spiritual preaching." He held that Scripture was *autopistos*, convincing in itself, and sought to prepare his auditors to receive it in their lives. If Donne explicated the "texture" of biblical language (in which even the order of the words could become a "sign" to be "spelled" for its "significance"), Sibbes sought "the Word" which Scripture conveys—and used it in his prose. Donne read a text as part of a patterned whole and sought to relate it to that whole, especially through typological relationships between it and other texts, while Sibbes more loosely appropriated the language to apply to and work upon the hearts of his hearers.

Knott's good discussion of Baxter, among many things, stresses the point that Puritans were not mere rationalists, but also preached to the emotions, and makes explicable their use of meditation. "Bring down thy conceivings to the

reach of sense," Knott quotes Baxter (p. 79), a line which exemplifies both. Not only must intellection connect with sensation, but meditation (which often seems an highly liturgical mode foreign to Puritans) allowed the Puritans a way to make that connection. Also admirable is Knott's attempt to connect Baxter's writing, and his ultimate emphasis upon "rest" to the trying, dislocated political and military trials through which he lived.

In Winstanley's writing Knott sees a considerable degree of "indifference to the literal sense of Scripture" which followed from the idea that "the 'word of life within' was more important than actual words" (p. 88). This loose way of treating the Bible enabled Milton to use the "law of Charity" to turn inside out such texts as Christ's strictures against divorce or Paul's idea of "burning." Knott sees in Winstanley a Baconian, "deep distrust" of language (one wonders if it was not perhaps too great optimism) which surfaced in a plain style and led Winstanley, out of his personal involvement with the Bible, to jumble together literal and figurative language. Winstanley did not explicate Biblical language; he appropriated it for effective impact in support of his activism.

Milton, for Knott, "appealed not so much to particular texts as to a conception of the Gospel..." (p. 109). That may be partly due to the fact that individual texts had been pretty thoroughly haggled over in nearly a century of controversial war when Milton began. The dance of controversy had become stylized (the awkward opacity of some of the anti-prelatical writing may stem from Milton's impatience with that dance and formalism), there can have seemed little new to say, and the texts and their general sense must have seemed quite apparent after all that explication. The "law of Charity" was one such "conception of the Gospel," a scheme based, I think, on a loose, historical scheme of progressive revelation from "justice" to "mercy," which allowed Milton to over-ride the apparent sense of a text. For Milton, "scripture" is hard to distinguish from "the Word" or "Truth," and Knott shows how, over time, Milton located it first as an external benchmark and finally within the adept. The middle of this change of location occurs in such a tract as *Areopagitica*, where "Truth" becomes Protean and the life, fire, or quickness of the "Word" seems to be associated with the English people. Though Milton was no Quaker, the manner in which he located "Truth" within people was similar to the doctrine of the "inner light" (and also to the internalization of "Antichrist" which Christopher Hill noted in the 1650's). Perhaps the most pleasant feature of Knott's analysis of the radical "personalization" of scripture is to show the way it eventuates, for example, in the dramatization of "the Word" as an actual character in *Paradise Lost*.

Bunyan shows the response of an "unlearned" man who fastens, with joy or horror, upon individual bits of the Bible; he is at the furthest remove from Donne's sense of "texture" and of "wholeness." Bunyan so internalized biblical language that it became almost his own in describing existential states. If he shows a radical version of the way Puritans pulled the Bible down into the muck of their lives and bent it to personal needs (in the case of Milton one almost has to say "whims"), in *The Holy War* Bunyan attempted to dramatize "the Word" much as Milton did—as a character. In a thorough way, the Puritans made the Bible *theirs*.

Knott's study is admirable for the same reasons it might be attacked. Mimetically, it traces association patterns radiating out from "the Bible" where some authors might profess more rigor. Mimesis is not exactly analysis, yet the flow of the Puritan mind emerges not sharply but well. It is an odd and interesting book about an odd and interesting subject.

BOYD BERRY

Virginia Commonwealth University

Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot, & Lawrence by Judith Wilt. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980. Pp. xii + 307. $18.50.

The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature by James B. Twitchell. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1981. Pp. x + 219. $14.75.

The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s by Winifred Hughes. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1980. Pp. x + 211. $15.00.

"When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its own merits." What Bishop Hurd wrote in 1762 about Gothic buildings applies equally well to Gothic romances. They seem deformed, inferior to realistic novels, until examined by their own rules. But what are those rules? Hurd's contemporaries tried to codify them in the theory of the sublime. Later writers have started there, although the picture has grown complicated by the expansion of Gothic—or, better, romanticism—into all areas of literature, leading to the recognition that sharp antitheses like Hurd's should be qualified or abandoned.

These new studies all show the interpenetration of Grecian and Gothic rules and also of "high" and "popular" culture in many of the central works of nineteenth-century literature. If Judith Wilt is right, for example, Jane Austen is more an imitator than a parodist of Ann Radcliffe. The debts to the Gothic of Wilt's other major writers, George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence, are easier to see, but her conclusion holds for Austen as well: the "ghosts of the Gothic" haunt even the writers of "the great tradition" of realism and high culture.

A related conclusion emerges from James Twitchell's fine study of literary vampirism. Like Van Helsing stalking the wicked Count, Twitchell pursues the vampire myth up some of the loftiest steeples of high culture—Keats, Wordsworth, Wilde, James—but also through some of the dingiest slums of popular culture—*Varney the Vampire* and other mid-Victorian "bloods." On the loftiest level, the vampire myth has served as a metaphor both for personal relations and for artistic creation. On the lowest, it has served merely to provide cheap thrills, sadistic entertainment,

Chronologically, Winifred Hughes' focus is narrower than either Wilt's or Twitchell's–the 1860s, when appeared those bestsellers by Collins, Reade, and Braddon that were dubbed "sensational." Here the interpenetration of romance and realism and also of cultural levels has always been recognized–this interpenetration forming, in fact, what might be called the problematic of the sensation novel. As Hughes says, "What distinguishes the true sensation genre, as it appeared in its prime during the 1860s, is the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally the two contradictory modes of literary perception" (p. 16).

Hughes' is the best book on its subject (in fact, it is the only full-length study since those by Walter Phillips in 1919 and S. M. Ellis in 1927). There are weaknesses: she excludes Dickens almost by definition and she mentions Le Fanu only once. But her essay is both important and nearly as entertaining as a good sensation novel, both because of the richness of her topic and because of the rightness of her critical perceptions. Better than anyone before her, she illuminates the patterns of moral ambiguity in her novelists. Thus bigamy–that key "sensation"–"has the advantage of making sexual offense into an actual crime," punishable and therefore less objectionable than mere adultery. And bigamy also validates the institution of marriage in a backhanded way (p. 31). The sensation novel expressed tabooed subjects and attitudes that could not be handled either in more proper fiction or in stage melodrama, to which it was closely related. "The matter-of-fact sensationalism of the 1860s was finished as a subversive force when the mainstream English novel began to accommodate the more troublesome elements denounced by its original reviewers" (p. 190). Meanwhile Trollope, Eliot, and especially Hardy registered its influence, although one of its offshoots–the detective novel–ironically substitutes an ordered, rational worldview for the anarchic one in the true sensation novel. So Hughes sees in *The Moonstone* "a deliberate narrowing of concern," an "escape" from the "sensational" difficulties expressed in Collins's earlier fiction (pp. 162-3). Hughes has written excellent analyses of Reade, Collins, Braddon, and Mrs. Henry Wood, as well as two very perceptive chapters about the Victorian esthetic theories that justified or rejected the sensation novel and a concluding one about its influence. She does for the fiction of the 1860s something close to what Kathleen Tillotson did for that of the 1840s.

Twitchell also brings to bear a lucidity and precision that make his study superior to most other works in the burgeoning field of vampire studies. His approach, a combination of cautious psychoanalysis and literary history, is well-suited to his subject, as it is more generally to the Gothic romance. Psychoanalysis is useful in dealing with romance and fantasy literature, partly because so much of that literature imitates dreams. Twitchell might have pushed harder on the historical side, however; he does not delve far into the social reasons for why vampirism breaks out in literature when it does–into the links, for example, between *Dracula*, the Decadence, and social conditions in the 1890s.

More daring than the other two, Wilt's study is also more uneven. This is not to detract from the importance of her enterprise, which is to show how the Gothic tradition has influenced F. R. Leavis's "great tradition," nor from the

many questions and insights she generates which, at their best, are brilliant. But her best insights are mixed up with ideas less than sensible. She insists on following a theological line, translating the ghosts of the Gothic into manifestations of the Holy Ghost. One sort of theological inquiry into the Gothic would lead back to the Jesuit author of *The Gothic Quest*, Montague Summers, who believed literally in demons and who thought that the witchhunters' manual, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, was "a very great and wise book" (see Twitchell, p. 15). Wilt is too sensible for that. But neither does she always follow a more rational and more historical procedure by carefully examining the religious implications of stories and the religious backgrounds of their authors. Rather, the Holy Ghost and "Trinitarian theology" intrude into her argument as metaphors, much more hers than her authors', the full reality of which she seems not quite willing to assert. So we are told that the Trinity may have had something to do with the eighteenth-century categories of "the sublime, the beautiful, and the transcendent" (p. 14), and also that the eighteenth century was the era of the Father, the nineteenth of the Son, and the twentieth of the Holy Ghost.

Wilt is most insightful when operating critically and historically, not theologically. The Gothic is a form of at least quasi-religious fiction, invoking religious dread. But Gothic contains no theology of any orthodox sort, even though many of its conventions and themes may be, as Joel Porte has argued, influenced by Calvinism. The sublime involved an estheticization of religious emotion, a regressive playing with outworn "superstitions" that allowed readers to feel enlightened and modern even while indulging in "uncanny" thrills. At its best, in James Hogg and Hawthorne, the genre often explores and repudiates religious fanaticism. At its worst, it exploits religious emotion for ends quite irreligious. When Wilt pays attention to Raymond Williams instead of the Holy Ghost, she comes closer to helpful definitions of Gothic in terms of violations of community by demonic outsiders who strive beyond human limits.

Wilt does not claim to be writing a full-scale examination of Gothic influences on British fiction. Such an examination would need to include Scott, Dickens, the Brontës, Conrad—to name only a few whom she briefly mentions. It would also need to include Le Fanu, Stevenson, Wells, and Hardy, the sensational novel of the 1860s, and the Decadent novel of the 1890s. The idea that American fiction has been dominated by romance forms is an old one, running from Leslie Fiedler and Richard Chase back to James and Hawthorne. The corollary—that British fiction has been dominated by realism—should be reconsidered in the light of studies like these, which suggest that romantic elements are much more central to British fiction than has yet been understood. But the more immediate conclusion to which these books point is that realism and romanticism, Bishop Hurd's Grecian and Gothic rules applied to literature, are rarely unalloyed.

PATRICK BRANTLINGER

Indiana University

The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s by Sheila M. Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. Pp. xvii + 282. $36.00.

"What a black, godless, waste-struggling world [is] this once merry England of ours" wrote Thomas Carlyle in 1839. In *The Other Nation*, Sheila M. Smith analyzes the fictional presentation of this "waste-struggling world" through a discussion of Disraeli, Kingsley, Dickens, Reade and Gaskell. Focusing on the response of these writers to the condition of the poor as recorded in Blue Books, newspapers, journals and personal experience, Smith argues that failures of accuracy resulted in flawed accounts of working-class life. This means errors not only in descriptions of physical life, language and working conditions, but in the ability of the authors to accept the pessimistic conclusion their portrayal of the poor logically established. "Despite the darkness of the poverty they depict, despite the warnings given," writes Smith, the novelists optimistically believed that their revelations would dispel the ignorance and inaction toward the poor and reconcile the "Two Nations."

The force of Smith's argument rests on her evaluation of "a novelist's re-creation of the physical actuality of the poor... the 'fact' of their external reality" in six Victorian novels: *Sybil*, *Yeast*, *Alton Locke*, *Mary Barton*, *Hard Times* and *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*. Her preference is for the full and complete presentation of "the actual" in fiction, without distortion or misrepresentation. Her concern is whether middle-class novelists "can extend their consciousness to include the life of the Other Nation so that their readers imaginatively experience it." Ideally, Smith anticipates a blend of the accurate and the real to achieve symbolic significance. But when fiction fails to record accurately the appearance and environment of the Other Nation, the novels fail to establish symbols "expressive of the elusive essential reality." The novels falter because of a lack of imagination and the nature of their composition: "although there are occasional glimpses of the actuality of the Other Nation, the novels are inevitably what the Victoran middle class thinks and fears of the Other Nation rather than an imaginative recreation of its life."

Each of the novelists Smith scrutinizes is shown to be inadequate in portraying the poor. Disraeli's dialogue is "artfully contrived" and insensitive to the original qualities of speech of the poor. In *Sybil* he creates an ennobling heroine at odds with the evocation of the Other Nation. Mrs. Gaskell ruins an otherwise excellent treatment of the poor in *Mary Barton* through her implication of John Barton in "a totally untypical murder" displaying "a failure of vision." In *Hard Times* Dickens lacks verisimilitude in the presentation of the circus, offering a nebulous imaginative life, while Kingsley, in *Alton Locke*, counsels starving Chartists to wait for a "new Christian Society,'" an idealistic request. In *It Is Never Too Late To Mend*, Reade lets his solution to the prison question get lost in a melodramatic plot. In short, the ideas of the novelists contradict the often inaccurate imaginative creation of the poor. This is a result of moving from the people, the individual characters in the novels, to the problem; the exhortation to moral action "disturbs the concentration on the Other Nation."

Despite her constant references and illustrations, Smith's interpretation of the treatment of the poor in the novels of the 1840s and 50s is questionable. Her attachment to the historically accurate and constant comparison of the "facts" to the fiction limits an appreciation of the novels as works of art. She discards the aesthetic demands of the novel and judges it entirely as history. She unfairly exposes the novels' inadequate use of reports, statistics and testimonies discounting the fictional nature of the works. Statements on art and the Victorian imagination are reductive and often tautological: "the novel is the most important Victorian literary form because the finest novelists realized that narrative is a profoundly serious art..." or "fiction is used to simplify and distort a serious actuality." Smith strongly reacts against a formalist understanding of the nineteenth century novel and undermines any aesthetic excellences by proving its social and historical inaccuracies. Her allegiance is to Lukacs whose famous dictum she quotes: "the essential aim of the novel is the representation of the way society moves."

The Other Nation, however, is not without use. The discussion of the poor and the visual arts, and link between the idea of the poor and the ballad form are original and revealing. So, too, is the wealth of references to and citations of historical data from the 1840s and 1850s, although footnotes annoyingly appear in the text and distract the reader. This reliance on data in lengthy quotations, however, frustrates the presentation of an argument; only in the last two chapters does one begin to find a cogent development of the thesis. The most interesting chapter is on charity and its literary and visual representation associated with the conventional tableau of the rich "succoring the poor." Smith argues that extending charity to the poor merely extended the control of the middle-class over the indigent, with the Angel of Charity remaining a sentimental rather than compassionate image.

"The romantic side of familiar things"—Dickens' statement in the "Preface" to *Bleak House*—persists as the criterion of merit for Smith, an idea she expresses as the "Romantic vision of truth," defined as an intense union of subject and object to create the symbolic. Cocketown, then, "lacks the observed substance of Carlyle's symbols" because it "fails to embody 'the Infinite,'" while Mrs. Gaskell at her best recalls "the finest poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats." But the inability of the social novel of the 1840s and 50s consistently to achieve this union automatically discredits it as a literary enterprise for Smith. Disdain for sensational elements and imaginative distortions in these novels creates an aggressive interpretation that virtually seeks to rewrite the original works.

While crediting her subjects for confronting the fact of the poor in fiction, Smith laments their ineffectual presentation of "the actual." Her final plea is to understand the fiction of the poor as an adjunct, not opponent, to such groups as the Statistical Society of London because when the "synthesizing method of the Romantic imagination" combines with the "empirical method of the natural and social scientists," certain revelatory images and scenes do emerge, moments where art does indeed exceed fact. But, admits Smith, argument inevitably follows imaginative representation and the moment uniting fact and imagination quickly disappears. Uneven fiction results and a divide

between social reality and personal morality emerges. With its biases, *The Other Nation* precludes a balanced reading of six important early Victorian novels, although as a work of historical scholarship it provides a storehouse of valuable material and information.

IRA NADEL

University of British Columbia

The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists by Mason I. Lowance, Jr. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1980. Pp. x + 335. $20.00.

The study of that branch of hermeneutics called typology received an enormous boost in April 1974 when Princeton University and the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored the Princeton Conference on Typology. Earl Miner of the Princeton English Department organized the conference and subsequently published the conference papers under the title *Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present* (1977).

A number of scholars had led out in recent years in the study of typology in literature and were probably the inspiration for such a conference, most notably William G. Madsen, *From Shadowy Types to Truth* (1968); Ursula Brumm, *American Thought and Religious Typology* (1970); and Sacvan Bercowich. A veritable flood of works—numerous articles, parts of monographs, and whole books on the subject have come out of the conference, most recently Barbara Lewalski's *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (1979) and George P. Landow's *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows* (1980), on the British side of the issue, and now Mason I. Lowance, Jr.'s *The Language of Canaan*, on the American side of the issue. Quite a number of other works on the subject are in the works by these conferencers. Typology, long the province of critics of religion, has now become a veritable cottage industry of literature criticism.

Lowance's book on typology in America represents the fine research and writing that has gone into the making of this industry, but it also shows just how suspect the whole methodology is. It represents the apex/nadir of such. One suspects this little movement in literary criticism will have soon *had* its importance. It has been a valuable road for criticism to go, but I suspect it is a dead end.

The book brings together Lowance's brief publications on the subject from about the past ten years to give a coherent picture of his fascination with millennialist symbolism from the time of American settlement (and just a little before that) to the time of the Transcendentalists (and just a little beyond them). It is Perry Miller's New England Mind narrowed to a single quirk of the American brain.

That particular quirk has now caught our attention in our own time. Intellectual historians and literary critics of the early period are endemically hard-pressed to find that which was indigenous to the making of America and American

literature. Typology appears to be, for the moment, one that one can point to. We invented, the methodology argues, ardent millennialism. The Millennium, by hope or by metaphor, was always ours.

Though with considerable dexterity Lowance traces the development and uses of typology from the scholiasts of the late Middle Ages through the English scriptural exegetes to Winthrop and the Mathers and on (by some mysterious atavism) to Emerson and Thoreau, the methodology he has picked up for his study is suspect in at least three very important ways. For one thing, it shows the fallacy that a literary critic often makes, taking the texts of a period, particularly the published texts of a writing ministry, to make up an accurate sociology of that period. (Larzer Ziff's *Puritanism in America* is an admirable corrective to this, showing the odds are that the first three generations of settlers were much more of economic mind than they were of metaphoric mind.) For another thing, the methodology implies that all the settlers were of *one* mind, even of one mind for a good two hundred years. This has been the one great sin of Perry Miller, for there more than likely never was *a* Mind in New England. To some extent, Professor Lowance writes in affirmation of that large Miller fallacy. (Kai Erickson's *The Wayward Puritans* is an entertaining corrective to this, as is the work of Philip Gura on the deviations of the Connecticut River Valley settlers.)

The third fallacy of the typological method of criticism is harder to name. It involves the critic's fascination with one literary figure, fitting on that writer's eye for size, and then looking out at the rest of America from that perspective. I think Sacvan Bercovitch falls into that problem in seeing the American Self almost entirely through Cotton Mather's eyes in his *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. And I think that H. H. Waggoner falls into it in seeing America's evolving libertarianism almost entirely through Emerson's eyes in his *American Poets: From the Puritans to the Present*. In the present study, Lowance's typology-hero is Jonathan Edwards. And though he gives due regard to typology-makers like Cotton Mather (while largely ignoring Mather's monomaniacal motives) and Edward Taylor (while largely ignoring the poverty of Taylor's esthetics), it is Lowance's Edwards who is the seminal mind: he absorbed virtually all of the typologizing that had gone on before him and he reproduced it in attractive and convincing form for generations to come. Mason-Lowance-in-Jonathan-Edwards-drag invented America the Millennial.

Certainly there is nothing wrong with working from Edwards outward to the rest of America, for his was assuredly the greatest mind of the period, bar none. The late Middle Ages from an Edwards perspective is alive and well. The American settlement and evolution to a nation from an Edwards perspective has more inventiveness and intelligence to it than any other American era. Edwards as seen from an Edwards perspective connected the earth and the heavens with a lovely equivocating logic the likes of which we have not seen since. And the Emerson and Thoreau that Edwards made from his perspective are ardent New England millennialists/utopianists to their (rotten?) core. Though, to be kinder, it is not actually Edwards that we find everywhere but Lowance looking at two hundred years of American metaphor-making from the eye of Edwards-the-Typologizer. Doing this, Lowance covers The History of American

Typology extremely carefully, looks briefly at each of the contributors to that History brilliantly, and works, almost convincingly, to establish metaphor as the one reliable factor in the making of America. The method is suspect, however, as I have said, for it selects out from thousands of factors one that might make A History one can talk about; and it canonizes the barely-readable publishing of a handful of pip-squeak writers; and it to a large extent ignores both the ways in which some Old World metaphors (along with its heroes and history) got ignored in America and the ways in which other metaphors got taken so literally as to confuse intellectual matters completely. America was just too diverse at the outset to make such a literary theory of unity plausible, and God knows it has become impossibly diverse since then to make *an* America even realizable. The attractive canopy that hermeneutics throws over America has always been ripped by the winds and currents.

This is not to denigrate the current stichery on this canopy by Lowance. He accurately identifies the medieval origins of typology in its modern senses—though the coverage seems more obligatory than totally relevant to the American experiments with it. He carefully points to the key English Puritan thinkers on the subject—though without explaining why they *did* so little about it, why they had so little of a sense of mission with it. He explicates the Canticles as the one scriptural text which put the typology to its severest and most imaginative test—though without fully explaining what that text had to do with the emerging American utopianism. (A case in point is Edward Taylor's virtual refusal to make any connection whatsoever between the Canticle types and the American future!) He covers thoroughly the dull, bulky works on typology in early Massachusetts by such loose-minded ministers as Samuel Mather, Edward Taylor, and Cotton Mather—though making them, I feel, far too representative of all the minds in early America. He gives the rest of the book, justifiably, over to Edwards—though giving short shrift to the typology of the Revolution and of the American Renaissance; these read like codas to the Edwards phenomenon, maybe because that's all they were. America had perhaps gone on to *other* kinds of Utopia not connected with the earlier ones.

Even with the reservations I state here, I find Lowance's story of metaphor in early America enlightening. As a lover primarily of literary texts, I enjoy watching Lowance make our writers the main bearers of the burden of Inventing America. But I am not sure he is right about this. To be sure, the images and types and myths that early Americans used for understanding themselves anew here came by way of language. But I am not sure that we have yet really found the means by which these got going and got us involved. For all we know, the settlers to each new West may have been their creators and purveyors, or the itinerant preachers on horseback, or the millions of early American women praying for a better world than they had, or the duping orators and pamphleteers in need of selling an American Revolution, or, instead, of the likes of Emerson and Thoreau, the likes of the Millerites and the Mormons. The possibilities are many. But for now, thanks to the work of Lowance, the literature will do. Very nicely.

KARL KELLER

San Diego State University

Nathaniel Hawthorne: The English Experience, 1853-1864 by Raymona E. Hull. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980. Pp. xvi + 307. $21.95.

It is Raymona Hull's intention to examine and evaluate a period of Hawthorne's life which, she argues, has not received its share of consideration. In order to fill in gaps and correct inaccuracies in previous accounts, Hull's narrative relies on Hawthorne's journals and travel diaries and his wife's letters, with supplemental information provided by letters of friends and acquaintances. What emerges is a tale of the Hawthorne family suffering an almost unrelieved series of disillusionments: the filth and poverty of Liverpool, the inclement English weather, financial disappointments, Roman malaria, boorish merchants, boring litterateurs are unreliable governesses. Because Hull's narrative is essentially a summary of her primary sources, Hawthorne's ponderous English and French and Italian notebooks and Sophia Hawthorne's letters to her family, it follows the travels of this apparently unpleasant American couple and records their almost incessant carping about almost everything. Even when they appear to be enjoying themselves, the reader soon learns that disenchantment is lurking just a few pages ahead. One is reminded of D. H. Lawrence's complaint about American "Vandals": "...the beautiful things of Europe were just having their guts pulled out by these American admirers." That is too strong, however, because the tone of the Hawthornes' writing is characterized not only by unpleasantness but also by torpor.

When Hawthorne left for England in 1853, his best writing was already behind him. Only *The Marble Faun*, that strangely inert romance culled from his notebooks, would be written; that, and the characterizations of English people, places and customs in *Our Old Home*. The "English experience" then has little bearing on his career except in a peculiar and potentially interesting way. In full length biographies, such as Randall Stewart's and Arlin Turner's, this period is treated as Hawthorne's public decade: the famous romancer in Europe basking in the adulation of European and expatriate admirers. Hull presents another picture, that of an intensely private man who cannot cope with his own success, who affects "shyness" to excuse himself from dinner invitations, who chooses a select group of male friends with whom he can drink and be entertained, who finds writing a labor and public appearances a chore, and who takes notes as if he were trying to escape "Culture 101" with a C. In this respect, the "English experience" recapitulates the American one, the chief difference being that in the 1850s Hawthorne had achieved the fame he had dreamed of in the 1830s when, after an undistinguished college career, he published his writing anonymously and when his solicitous friends were the upwardly mobile Americans Horatio Bridge and Franklin Pierce rather than their English counterparts Henry Bright and Francis Bennoch. Despite the fact that little memorable writing emerged from this period of Hawthorne's life, an examination of the English experience ought to provide an interesting perspective on his career as a whole.

Unfortunately, there are problems with Hull's account, which is often less

an examination of an experience than an itinerary. When her sources are unavailable–as when Sophia's letters home cease with the death of her father–Hull refuses to speculate about the quality of experience which is no longer recorded. Even when sources are available, Hull is hesitant to draw inferences which extend beyond the brute facts themselves. This is not a serious problem when the data are shopping lists or travel plans, but so much of the notebooks and letters are taken up with posturing and attitudinizing that they seem to require more than a cursory interpolation. Hull's hesitancy to make inferences leads often to a pre-empting of any sort of interpretation. Of Hawthorne's professed fondness for drink, Hull apologizes that this "may have been part of an attempt to cover up his shyness" (p. 41). But that only begs the question about his shyness, about which Hawthorne continually reminded those he did not wish to visit. Of Hawthorne's famous comment on Melville, Hull asserts, "It may serve as a partial rejoinder to those critics who have theorized that after the end of the Lenox period, the relationship between Melville and Hawthorne became decidedly cool" (p. 106). Yet the passage she quotes, which reads like a eulogy, is nothing if not "decidedly cool." Of *Our Old Home*, Hull attempts to excuse Hawthorne's unflattering caricatures of English women–which caused a rift in his friendships with Bright and Bennoch–as the judgment of Hawthorne's "literary persona" (p. 218); yet in the next paragraph, she writes of "Hawthorne's ambivalence toward England" as expressed in other sketches, identifying Hawthorne once again with this "figure of his imagination." This attempt to save Hawthorne from criticism is not really even-handedness but evasiveness and curiously makes Hawthorne seem dull as well as unpleasant. One wonders why anyone would be interested in him. More importantly, it obscures the crux of the problem Hull has raised throughout her book: the disparity between two important figures of his imagination, the shadowy Nathaniel Hathorne of Salem and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the famous writer of romances.

Hull has provided a wealth of data, copious notes, a very useful index of primary source materials and even capsule biographies of more than one hundred fifty people mentioned in her book. But while she has detailed Hawthorne's travels and recorded his judgments–judgments which are variously interesting, contradictory, priggish or silly–she has not really examined their meaning for Hawthorne and thus has not really illuminated his "experience."

JOHN FRANZOSA

Wayne State University

Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars by Paul Fussell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Pp. x + 246. $14.95.

To read Paul Fussell's recent books, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) or his new study of travel literature, *Abroad*, is to become aware of how much other critics sacrifice when they try to understand a period through the

exclusive study of its "major authors." Ever since Leavis' *The Great Tradition*, the idea that literary commentary should proceed by the careful scrutiny of a few canonical texts has been firmly established. The method has influenced the whole way in which literary tradition is understood and transmitted by the academy—in period courses that pretend to give a sense of an epoch by offering a dozen disparate masterpieces in as many weeks, in textbooks and paperback editions that make this method of instruction possible, in the pervasive mental habits that turn the great writers and their most complex works into the standard units of inquiry at every level of investigation, from the freshman literature paper to the doctoral dissertation and beyond. Closely associated with this intellectual fashion is what Fussell calls "generic snobbery"—the virtual exclusion from serious consideration of any work that happens not to be fiction, poetry, or drama. *The Great War and Modern Memory* showed how much is gained by conceiving the territory differently and by reading more promiscuously, in letters, memoirs, war propaganda, journalism—as well as in the traditional high genres. The book enlarged and deepened our sense of one of the great events in human history and its effect on people's lives in a way that a more selective literary study could not possibly have done.

Fussell brings these promiscuous habits of reading to his study of travel literature, and while he does not pretend that the subject is of comparable significance, he shows how important for an understanding of British culture between the wars was the pervasive desire to get away. Exile and alienation have long been treated as essential aspects of literary modernism, but Fussell is the first critic to take the impulse toward flight literally—not as a metaphor but as a fact of human movement. The great vogue of travel books written between the wars is shown to be the outward and visible sign of the rejection of home and all it stands for. What Fussell calls the British Literary Diaspora was to deposit writers like Lawrence, Graves, Norman Douglas, Lawrence Durrell, Huxley, Maugham, Isherwood, Auden and many others far from their native land, more or less permanently, because of their settled conviction that England had become uninhabitable. The more familiar phenomena of American, Russian, and German expatriation in the twentieth century have received a good deal of attention; but the comparable movement in England has never been so fully explored.

Fussell is interested in what this widespread wish and need to escape can tell us about the cultural climate of the period between the wars. In analyzing the hundreds of literary travel books he has read, he finds certain dominant themes also present in the modernist masterpieces but here given a more unmediated expression: the feeling of exhaustion after World War I, the sense of British culture as repressive, the search for more "primitive" alternatives to it and for a modern equivalent to literary pastoral, the need to sever roots and take to the road, to get away from the given of one's expected identity. Fussell's deliberately indiscriminatory reading—his willingness to cite Agatha Christie and even Barbara Cartland along with Waugh, Powell, and Henry Green—makes us aware that certain modes of thought regularly treated as signs of the era's high culture were really far more pervasive period qualities, finding expression at different levels of literary sophistication. Fussell's quarrel is with

the method of treating the masterpieces as though they were somehow above or detached from their time, when in fact they are often illuminated by an understanding of their links with the wider culture. So, for example, the new regulations of the Passport Office help to explain a puzzling passage in Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod*, and a minor writer's description of the vogue of seascapes and port scenes in the poetry and fiction of the period "may do more than myth criticism can to suggest why those sailors and fishermen and even fish-vendors are in *The Waste Land*." But the best travel books are not merely useful tools for understanding the higher genres. They are treated both as intrinsically interesting and as more reliable documents for "the student of period themes." As Fusselll puts it, "one can infer more about the spirit of the age from a pack-rat like Archibald MacLeish than from a master like Eliot."

That sentence, for all its self-mockery, suggests the weakness of Fussell's method as well as its freshness. There is a good deal of special pleading in this book, along with a tiresomely persistent highbrow-baiting, like the attack on critics who "go haring after Hegel and Nietzsche and Freud and Heidegger and Wittgenstein" in their attempt to explain modernism. In making a case for the importance and inherent literary quality of the best travel books, Fussell often overstates his case: Baedeker, it turns out, "is a better writer than the bulk of Victorian novelists." And a work by Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, is to the travel book "what *Ulysses* is to the novel between the wars and what *The Waste Land* is to poetry." Unfortunately, Fussell's extensive quotations from Byron's forgotten book are not reassuring. They suggest a writer who matched Evelyn Waugh in his capacity for apoplectic outrage but could only manage patronizing nastiness in place of Waugh's brilliant wit. Perhaps such lapses of judgment are an inevitable concomitant of the rescue work among the despised genres Fussell has undertaken. They are easily ignored excesses in the context of his achievement. Like a good travel book, *Abroad* explores new territory with a fresh eye and reveals riches not seen so clearly in the too familiar literary landscape we have learned to call our culture.

ALEX ZWERDLING

University of California, Berkeley

William Faulkner: His Life and Work by David Minter. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. Pp. xviii + 325. $16.95.

Joseph Blotner's monumental 1974 biography has had a measurable but not a revolutionary impact on Faulkner studies. As comprehensive chronicle rather than analytical portrait, it did not present an authoritative thesis which critics have had to confront; but, as a gold mine of relevant details, it has richly served many scholars pursuing their own lines of inquiry. Increasingly, moreover, book-length studies have taken on the character of searches for an identity theme or pattern linking author and fiction and utilized biographical data, rather than offered formalist readings of individual texts or arguments for patterns within the fiction alone. Relatively recent books by Gary Stonum, Arthur Kinney, John Irwin, and Lee Clinton Jenkins are cases in point. There have also been

since 1974 suggestions that another kind of biography was needed—a readable yet analytical "life" with a clearer view of Faulkner, one less dominated by multitudinous details. Blotner himself, of course, intends to provide this year a one-volume version of his scholarly biography for the general reader. In 1979, Judith Bryant Wittenberg published a purportedly psychoanalytic biography of Faulkner that opened promisingly with an insightful first chapter, but then lapsed into conventional readings of the major fiction. Now David Minter, whose only previous book, more than a decade ago, was *The Interpreted Design as a Structural Principle in American Prose*, has set out to bring Faulkner's art and life "into many different juxtapositions and conjunctions."

Minter examines the imaginative space in which Faulkner's genius develops, particularly focusing on "initiatory and shaping experiences." One theme is the opposition of the formal, withdrawn personal self and the open, fluid fictional world he created—the "variety of guises, roles, and masks that enables him to keep people at a distance" and the "strategies that permitted greater displacement and disguise" in the novels. Minter carefully and sensitively studies the ways in which Faulkner's art functions as compensation for a series of rejections, as a mode of action, as means of revision that allowed him both to explore and to hide his deepest personal anxieties. The rather complicated emotional relationships he had with father, mother, brothers, as well as the series of deeply felt associations with, in addition to his wife Estelle, Helen Baird, Meta Carpenter, and others—these inform his novels in profound ways. Minter, as he demonstrated in an earlier article on *The Sound and the Fury*, can interrelate such biographical material with patterns in the fiction without either treating literature reductively or revising the life simplistically on the basis of the fiction. With a firm grounding in Faulkner scholarship, he seems to have read well, if not broadly, in psychoanalytic theory, particularly studies in narcissism and object relations. There are no references to provide this, and no jargon, merely a delicate but consistent treatment of such matters in the psychologically complex major novels.

Weaknesses in the book are but two. First, like so many studies of Faulkner, it is more satisfactory on the "major years" than on the later years. The final chapters seem more perfunctory than analytical. This is surely the consequence of the fact that Faulkner's inner life before 1940 was more interesting than his later years. But there remain significant unanswered questions about, for example, his complex relationship with Gavin Stevens in all those late novels, and his agonizing for ten years over *A Fable*. Secondly, Minter neglects the impact of literary and intellectual influences on Faulkner's inner life, or more precisely their interplay with the personal and social influences that are the center of his concern. To comprehend the relationship between Faulkner's life and work requires a fusion of Minter's analysis with the kind of study Arthur Kinney attempts, in *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics*, of Faulkner's grappling with his great predecessors like Flaubert, Proust, and Joyce. These shortcomings, however, do not seriously lessen the value of Minter's book as a sensitive and insightful correlation of Faulkner's personal life with the continuities of his literary career.

JOHN BASSETT

Wayne State University